## ENGLISH 260B

SPRING 2009

## LITERATURE OF SELF-DISCOVERY

## MEMORIAL HALL 303

Tuesdays and Thursdays 4:00-5:15
Professor: Sally Hirsh-Dickinson, Ph.D.
Office: Memorial Hall 302E
Office Hours: T/R 10:45-11:45; 2:30-3:30; W 9:00-11:00 (and by appointment)
EMAIL: shirshdickinson@rivier.edu

## *This Syllabus is Subject to Change*

## Course Description

This course explores the ways in which children and adults throughout the centuries have discovered and invented their identities in literature. It examines the role of the imagination and language in defining oneself, and the conflicts between self and society that often result. In this course, we will ponder several questions:

- What value does literature offer us in terms of self-understanding? What do we learn about characters, about ourselves, and about "self and other"?
- What kinds of self-discoveries might one forge by reading literature?
- What is "the self"? Why is it worth contemplating?
- What advantage might psychological theories and perspectives offer in answer to questions about selfhood?
- What is it to "discover" the self? What events or forces trigger discovery? How might we describe such experiences?


## COURSE GoALS

The overriding goal of this course is to help you to read, think, discuss, and write about literature with increasing sophistication, and to see that doing so can be pleasurable and enable you to gain insights into yourself as student, scholar, individual, and member of any number of communities (it is a course about self-discovery, after all). This course is designed to assist you in:

1. Developing an appreciation of the act of reading;
2. Recognizing what literature written from a variety of "selves" has to offer you as you reflect on your own life;
3. Gaining expertise in speaking and writing about literature;
4. Exploring issues related to the human condition;
5. Developing and exercising critical thinking skills by analyzing a specific literary theme within selected fiction, memoir, poetry, drama, and film;
6. Synthesizing texts within the context of the course theme across time and/or across cultural, racial, and gender differences;
7. Understanding and applying key literary terms and concepts in written analysis of literature;
8. Reading literary texts in at least three genres (fiction, poetry, drama, creative non-fiction, literary/scholarly essay), and being able to explain differences between genres;
9. Writing analytically and interpretatively about both a single text and multiple texts;
10. Integrating and discussing quotations and textual evidence in essays, using current MLA documentation guidelines.

## Course Texts

Hurston, Zora Neale. Their Eyes Were Watching God. New York: HarperCollins, 1999.
Satrapi, Marjane. Persepolis: The Story of a Childhood. New York: Pantheon, 2004
Thelma and Louise. Dir. Ridley Scott. Perf. Susan Sarandon, Gina Davis, Harvey Keitel, and Brad Pitt. MGM, 1991. Running time: 129 minutes.
Williams, Tennessee. The Glass Menagerie. New York, W.W. Norton \& Co., 1999.
Course Handouts. These are designated on the Schedule of Assignments with an (H). There are many of these. By Week 3, all course handouts will be posted on the Blackboard course website. It will be your responsibility to access them and print them out. You must have a Blackboard account in order to complete your enrollment for this course. Be sure to print out the assigned readings and bring them with you to class on the days that we will be discussing them.

## TEACHING Strategies

a. Seminar-style reading and discussion
b. A commonplace book
c. A five-page essay closely analyzing one of our readings
d. A seven-page essay exploring an important difference between several works
e. Informal written reflections on your learning
f. Short reading checks

## Evaluation Procedures

Your final grade for the course will be based on the following distribution:

| Reading Checks | $12 \%$ |
| :--- | :--- |
| Commonplace Book: | $22 \%$ |
| Paper 1: | $22 \%$ |
| Paper 2: | $32 \%$ |
| Personal Anthology of Poetry | $12 \%$ |

You will receive both written and spoken feedback from me about your work. If you have specific questions about my comments or about your grades, please come see me.

## Reading Checks

I will administer a handful of unannounced five-question reading checks drawn from the assigned readings and our class discussions over the course of the semester. They will be worth a combined total of $10 \%$ of your course grade. I will drop your lowest two scores from the mix and calculate your grade based on those that remain. There will be no make- ups for missed reading checks. If you happen to be absent on the day of a reading check, that zero will be one of the grades that is dropped from the final tally.

## COMMONPLACE BOOK

This assignment comes directly and entirely from Professor Tim Doherty. Because it struck me as a highly useful and productive undertaking for a class such as this one, I have refrained from tinkering with it and have left it in Professor Doherty's words. Here's how he describes the commonplace book and how he instructs students to write their own:

The commonplace book is a type of reading journal. From the Renaissance into the $19^{\text {th }}$ century, literate people kept commonplace books, pages bundled together that would contain important quotations (what they called "commonplaces," because the reader considered the quotation commonsense or wise, worthy of keeping). Throughout the semester, you will create a commonplace book electronically on your computer. For each text you read in the course, you will transcribe key lines and passages of your choice into your commonplace book. For an example of a commonplace book entry, see the example included in this syllabus.

Your goal will be to select quotations that capture central ideas or ambiguities in the readings and then write a reflective comment-tell us what the quotation makes you think about the themes and questions we are raising in the Unit at hand. After your reflection, try to frame a question for in-class discussion-a question that advances our thinking about the quotation. So, to sum up, here's the process:

## Quotations

For each work we read in a Unit, provide a page that collects quotations as instructed. At the top of your page in your CPB for this work, provide the author and title in bold-face for the work. In other words, provide one page per reading. Then place the quotation(s), followed by the page \# in parentheses.

## Reflection

Write a few sentences connecting the quotation(s) to the themes we are discussing in the Unit at hand. Does each quotation help us understand the questions we are posing in the Unit? How? Does each connect to some other work read in the Unit? What are the connections?

## Questions

Below the reflection, pose a question for discussion-a question that opens discussion about the heart of the matter, the ultimate point of the reading.

Be sure to bring printouts of your commonplace book entries for each
class. I will sometimes randomly collect CPB entries to monitor your progress. We will sometimes use them as the starting point for class discussion and may also use them as the basis for in-class writings. Your commonplace book will also serve as your most valuable resource for discovering ideas for your papers.

Your accumulated CPB entries will be collected twice during the semester: at about the halfway and three-quarter marks of the term (see Schedule of Assignments below). Your grade for this work will be based on the rubric which is appended to this syllabus. The mid-semester grade will be an estimate based on the quality of work you have produced by that point. The final grade for your CPB will be issued following the late-semester submission.

## ESSAYS

I will present you with assignment sheets for your essays well in advance of their due dates. We will take the time in class to go over their parameters, my expectations, clarify any confusion, and so forth. When first drafts are due, we will hold peer group workshops in which you'll have the opportunity to get feedback from an audience other than your professor (that's me). At that time, I will offer you and your colleagues some guidelines for peer response and some focused questions to assist you in the process.

Final drafts of your essays must be revised such that they productively incorporate the feedback you receive on an early draft, whether that feedback comes from me or your classmates. Editing - that is, correcting for spelling, grammar, and punctuation - is not revising. Revising includes such corrections and reconsiders issues of content, clarity of thought, relevance of example, coherence, and form (among other considerations) where necessary.

## Personal Anthology of Poetry

See separate assignment, to be handed out later in the semester.

## COURSE POLICIES

In this course you are expected to:

- Engage with the assigned readings through class discussion and written response. By this, I mean to encourage you think about, respond to, and question the works you will encounter. This may be easier to do with some readings than with others. Always feel free to ask questions and seek assistance when you find yourself confused or lost with an assignment.
- Come to class prepared - bring the day's reading and writing assignments with you.
- Submit hard copies of your formal writing assignments to me. Do not send your work to me electronically (see e-mail policy below).
- Follow the formatting and presentation guidelines for formal written assignments included with this syllabus (see below).
- Participate in workshops and in-class writing exercises.
- Be respectful and considerate of your colleagues in all classroom interactions.
- Turn off your cell phone (see below).
- Refrain from holding private conversations with colleagues while class is in session.
- Attend classes in accordance with the attendance policy below.
- Be punctual. The classroom doors automatically lock when they are shut. Late arrivals are disruptive to class.
- Because of the locked-door issue, please visit restrooms before or after class.
- Let me know ahead of time if you have to leave before class has finished.
- Wait until I have officially ended the day's discussion/workshop/screening before you begin to gather your belongings and pack up your bags.
- Pass in your work when it is due. Late work, if not arranged well ahead of time and with exceptionally good reason, will not be accepted.


## A Note on Cell Phones

Cell phone use is not permitted in class. You are expected to turn off your cell phone when you enter the classroom and leave it off until class is dismissed. If you forget to power down and your phone rings, do not answer it. If you do, you will be asked to leave and will be marked absent for the day. The same fate will befall you if you are caught texting in class, checking your phone for messages, etc. It is disrespectful and distracting to me and to your colleagues.

If there is an emergency or other urgent matter for which you need to be readily available, please tell whomever you need or expect to hear from that during this time, you will be in class in Memorial Hall, Room 303. Instruct that person to call the main office of the Department of English and Communications at $897-8568$ if $\mathrm{s} / \mathrm{he}$ needs to speak with you. If the matter is truly urgent, someone will deliver the message to the classroom. Your other option during times of crisis is to apply one of your absences toward that day and attend to the matter.

## E-mail Policy

Generally speaking, I will be available to respond to e-mails weekdays between the hours of 9 and 3 . Beyond these hours, I will be available online at my discretion. I do try to respond to e-mail messages within 24-36 hours of their showing up in my inbox. Please note, however, that an email that arrives at 2:55 on a Friday afternoon may not receive a response until early the following week.

If there is an urgent matter that you need to discuss, please come see me during my office hours (see above) or call and leave a voicemail message (be sure to include your phone number) at 897-8586.

## Attendance Policy

You are expected to attend all class meetings. I will record attendance at each session. If you arrive after class has begun, you will be marked as late. Three belated arrivals constitute one absence. If you arrive more than 20 minutes late, you will be marked as absent. Be aware that students who miss two or more classes in a row or more than three total will have their attendance records forwarded to their academic advisors and the Academic Dean. If a student misses two consecutive weeks of class (four meetings in a row), $s / h e$ is at risk of falling under Rivier's "habitual non-attendance" policy, which can result in administrative withdrawal from this (and other affected) courses. Additional details are included below.

Because there are any number of circumstances that may prevent you from making it to class (car trouble if you're a commuter, illness, simple twists of fate, etc.), you are permitted three "wildcard," non-consecutive absences over the course of the fourteen weeks we'll be meeting. Be judicious in your use of these. If you use them all ill-advisedly early on and then fall ill and miss additional classes, your final grade for the course will be reduced by a half-letter grade with each successive absence. Understand that a doctor's note does not grant you immunity from absenteeism.

Also keep in mind that absence from class does not affect the date a piece of work is due. Make sure your works gets to class when it is supposed to, even if you cannot.

## Here is the College's official Statement on Attendance:

The classroom is the heart of the educational experience at Rivier College because it provides, uniquely, a formal setting for the important exchanges among faculty and students. Regular and punctual attendance at all classes, essential for maximum academic achievement, is a major responsibility of Rivier College students. Failure to attend and contribute to the classroom environment significantly and demonstrably reduces the quality of the educational experience for everyone in the classroom. As a result, absences almost always impact the quality of performance.

As part of its commitment to a quality educational experience for all members of the Rivier community, the College formally requires specific attendance policies to be developed by its professors and reviewed by the Division Head and Academic Dean. Any attendance policy used by an individual professor as a criterion for evaluation must be specified in the course syllabus and presented to students during the first week of classes. These policies can be found in respective course syllabi, and may include reasonable penalties and sanctions for excessive absences [see above].

In the event of prolonged illness, accident, or similar emergency, it is the responsibility of the student to notify both the professor and the Office of the Academic Dean. Students must remember that it is always their responsibility to make up the work they may have missed during an absence from class. Students are directed to confer with their professors when their absences jeopardize satisfactory progress. Whenever a professor is absent without notification, students are expected to wait fifteen minutes before leaving and to sign an Attendance List, which a class member delivers to the Office of the Academic Dean. [Emphasis added]

Instructors are required to record attendance and alert the Registrar when a student fails to attend the equivalent of two weeks of courses ( 2 absences for a course meeting once a week, 4 absences for a course meeting twice a week, 6 absences for a course meeting three times a week). The student will then be alerted that he/she is in danger of falling under the 'habitual nonattendance policy" (see below).

Habitual Non-Attendance Policy (excerpted from the Rivier College Undergraduate Catalog):
Habitual non-attendance is defined as an absence in any course (for any reason whatsoever) equating to three full weeks of missed class sessions ( 3 absences for a course meeting once a week, 6 absences for a course meeting twice a week, 9 absences for a course meeting three times a week).

Faculty members will notify the Office of Academic Advising when a student has reached the habitual non-attendance criteria for their course(s). The Office of the Academic Administration, in collaboration with the student's Academic Advisor, will then attempt to resolve the issue of habitual non-attendance with the student. It is the responsibility of the student to notify the Office of Academic Advising of any intention to withdraw from a course or to withdraw from the College. If the student, however, has not officially withdrawn from the course(s) by the College's published last date to withdraw from a course, the faculty member will assign a grade of $N F$ of $F$.

Resident students who have documented habitual non-attendance in one or more classes may also be in jeopardy of violating the Resident Attendance Policy (see Student Handbook).

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Students who have attended no class sessions of a course or courses from which they are registered by the end of the drop/add period will be dropped from each class not attended. If a student never attended any courses during the drop/add period, the student will be withdrawn from his/her full schedule of courses.

ACADEmic Honesty (excerpted from the Rivier College Undergraduate Catalog):
Plagiarism and cheating are serious breaches of academic honesty. In general, plagiarism is defined as the presentation of someone else's work in whatever form: copyrighted material, notes, film, art work, reports, statistics, bibliographies, and the like, as one's own; and the failure to acknowledge the true source. Quoting word-for-word, or almost so, or using the argumentation of another source without acknowledging this dependence, also constitutes plagiarism.

Cheating is defined as the giving or attempting to give or to receive unauthorized information or assistance during an examination or in completing an assigned project. Submission of a single work for two separate courses without the permission of the instructors involved is also a form of cheating. [Emphasis added]

If students are unsure whether a specific course of action would constitute plagiarism or cheating, they should consult with their instructor in advance.

Penalties for plagiarism and cheating vary with the degree of the offense and may take the form of the following academic sanctions:

- the grade of $F$ for the work in question;
- the grade of $F$ for the course;
- notification of the department chair and/or Academic Dean of the College of the misconduct of the student;
- recommendations that the student be suspended or dismissed from the College.


## Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

Rivier College wants to provide reasonable accommodations to students with disabilities. To accomplish this goal effectively and to ensure the best use of our resources, the College expects students to provide timely notice of a disability to the Office of Special Services for verification and for evaluation of available options. Any student whose disabilities fall within ADA should inform the instructor within the first two weeks of the term of any special needs or equipment necessary to accomplish the requirements for the course. To obtain current information on this procedure, students should contact the Office of Special Services at telephone extension 8497. [Emphasis added]

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## SCHEDULE OF ASSIGNMENTS

*READINGS AND PAPERS ARE LISTED ON THEIR DUE DATES*

WEEK 1
Tuesday, January 20: Introduction to the course
Thursday, January 22: Begin Unit I: The Self in Writing
Discuss: Hughes, "I, Too, Sing America," (H) "Theme for English B" (H)
Kunitz, "The Layers" (H)
Roethke, "The Waking" (H)
Whitman, "One’s-Self I Sing" (H)
Week 2
Tuesday, January 27: Discuss: Hall, "Shunned" (H)
Thursday, January 29: White, "Once More to the Lake" (H)
Week 3
Tuesday, February 3: Begin Unit II: Discovering the Adult Self
Discuss: Erikson, "Adolescence" (H)
Thursday, February 5: Discuss: Updike, "A \& P" (H)
Joyce, "Araby" (H)
Week 4
Tuesday, February 10: Discuss: Cather, "Paul's Case"
Thursday, February 12: Paper \#1 Draft Due - Peer Response Workshop
Week 5
Tuesday, February 17: Discuss: Persepolis
Thursday, February 19: Discuss: Persepolis
WEEK 6

Tuesday, February 24: Paper \#1 Final Due
Thursday, February 26: Discuss: Bambara, "The Lesson" (H)

## WEEK 7

Tuesday, March 3:

Thursday, March 5:

Commonplace Books Due. Submit a print-out of your work to date. See grading rubric for information on how it will be assessed.
Discuss: Eliot, "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" (H)
O’Connor, "Good Country People" (H)

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WEEK 8
**SPRING BREAK**

WEEK 9

Tuesday, March 17:
Thursday, March 19:
Week 10
Tuesday, March 24:

Thursday, March 26 :
Discuss: Hurston, Their Eyes Were Watching God

WEEK 11
Tuesday, March 31:
Watch: Thelma and Louise
Thursday, April 2 :
Watch: Thelma and Louise

Week 12
Tuesday, April 7:
Discuss: Thelma and Louise
Thursday, April 9:
Paper \#2 Draft Due - Peer Response Workshop
Week 13
Tuesday, April 14:
Discuss: Chopin, "The Story of an Hour"
Thursday, April 16:
Final Commonplace Books Due
Week 14

Tuesday, April 21: Workshop - Personal Anthology of Poetry
Thursday, April 23: Workshop - Personal Anthology of Poetry
WEEK 15
Tuesday, April 28: Presentations of Poetry Anthologies
Thursday, April 30: Presentations of Poetry Anthologies
Final Examination Week
Thursday, May 7:
PAPER \#2 - FINAL, DUE BY 4:00 P.M.

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## Formatting and Presentation Guidelines for Formal Written Work

[These do not apply to freewrites and other impromptu in-class writing assignments]

- Type and double-space your work.
- Use one-inch margins.
- Include the following information in your heading, which should appear in the upper left-hand corner of the first page:

Your Name
Course Name and Section Number
Assignment title
Draft Number

- Staple or clip your pages together. No origami swan-style paper folds in the upper left-hand corner. Any multi-page assignments not fastened together will be handed back to you without a grade and will be considered late and penalized accordingly.
- Use either an Arial or a Times New Roman 10, 11, or 12 point font.
- Number your pages and your paragraphs. For paragraph numbering, bracket the number like this: [1]. Make sure it's flush up against the left-hand margin. Then indent (hit tab) and begin your paragraph. The result should look something like this:
[1] In her essay "Shunned," Meredith Hall explores the nature of "community" through the eyes of an adolescent outcast to small-town life in New Hampshire.
- Follow MLA guidelines for in-text citations and for formatting your works cited pages.
- When you are handing in your second (final) draft of an assignment, be sure to clip the first draft to it.


# Professor Tim Doherty's Sample Commonplace Book Entry 

## Title: Shiloh

Author: Mason

## Quotations

"When Leroy gets home from the shopping center, Norma Jean's mother, Mabel Beasley, is there. Until this year, Leroy has not realized how much time she spends with Norma Jean" (966).
"Norma Jean is going to night school. She has graduated from her six-week bodybuilding course and now she is taking an adult-education course in composition at Paducah Community College. She spends her evenings outlining paragraphs... "It's something to do" (970).
"Norma Jean used to say, "If I lost ten minutes' sleep, I just drag all day." Now she stays up late, writing compositions. She got a B on her first paper-a how-to theme on soupbased casseroles. Recently Norma Jean has been cooking unusual foods- tacos, lasagna, Bombay chicken. She deson't play the organ anymore, though her second paper was called "Why Music Is Important to Me." She sits at the kitchen table, concentrating on her outlines, while Leroy plays with his log house plans, practicing with a set of Lincoln Logs" (971).
"He wanted to know what she thought- what she really thought- about them" (969).
"Leroy gets up to follow his wife, but his good leg is asleep and his bad leg still hurts him. Norma Jean is far away, walking rapidly toward the bluff by the river, and he tries to hobble toward her. Some children run pat him, screaming noisily. Norma Jean had reached the bluff, and she is looking out over the Tennessee River. Now she turns toward Leroy and waves her arms. Is she beckoning him? She seems to be doing exercise for her chest muscles. The sky is unusually pale- the color of the dust ruffle Mabel made for their bed" (974).

## Reflection

Norma Jean and her mother, Mabel, spend a lot of time together. It was as if she was her only companion. In the story, though, it shows that Norma Jean is still afraid of what her mother thinks of her, and this is shown when Mabel catches Norma Jean smoking. I wonder what's going on in Norma Jean's mind-this story is told from Leroy's point of view, so it's tough to know. Still, the quotations l've picked seem to show that she's doing whatever she can to keep herself busy. She has taken body-building classes and is now taking another class. She states that she is doing it simply to do it. She has to keep herself busy. It gives her something to do. But what's she discovering about herself? In any case, Leroy begins to realize how much he doesn't know his own wife.

Poor Leroy—he was obviously thinking about the relationship that they had together. He didn't know whether they were going to last, if they were going to break up, or what Norma Jean thought of the relationship had grown to be over the years that he was on the road. When I first read this story, Norma Jean reminded me of the woman in "The Story of an Hour." Both of these women gained their freedom and they began to live their own lives. They realized that they did not need a man in order to be who they truly

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were-at least it's clearer that Mrs. Mallard makes this discovery. They both began to do (or plan) things for themselves.

Yet, I think that Norma Jean jumped into the river and committed suicide. I think this because of all of the foreshadowing that was going on in the story. She starts to do new things and says that it is just something to do. She seems as if she is just finding things to do to fill up her time during the day so that she isn't bored to death. Later on in the story when Leroy and Norma Jean go into Shiloh, they are having a picnic in the cemetery. I think that this is also a form of foreshadowing that she commits suicide by jumping in the river. In the end, however, like Mrs. Mallard, Norma Jean feels lost, empty, without freedom. Both women could not handle their loss of freedom and drastic measures, like death, occurred. To me, this story illustrates the things that can occur when there is no love in a relationship. I'm reminded of Eric Fromm...

## Questions

What would Norma Jean and Leroy have been like if Leroy was around all of the time?
Did Norma Jean realize that she did not need a man in order to discover herself? Where in the story is her frame of mind most obvious? What is she thinking? When? Is it possible to see her without Leroy's point of view framing everything?

## Professor Tim Doherty's Commonplace Book Grading Rubric

We've read about 28 writers thus far. I have scanned your CPB with a quick eye toward whether or not the entries are full and the comments pertinent, just to see if you are on the right track. I have circled the grade I would give you at this juncture. Feel free to come and speak with me about the CPB at any time. Also, see boxes l've marked below for particular tips on improving.

A:
© Very apt quotations-capturing key ideas of a text
$\oplus$ Ample and complex reflection that connects the quotation to a particular theme and its associated concerns and questions, and possibly to other writers.
$\oplus$ Very polished reflection-diction and sentences show control
B:
© Very complete-quotations from all major readings
© Apt quotations-capturing key ideas of a text
$\oplus$ Some connections to other works we have read.
$\oplus$ Relevant comments that connect the quotation to a particular theme.

- Very few grammatical errors-the entry has obviously been proofread

C:
© A "fair" number of writers/texts covered

- Mostly apt quotations-capturing key ideas of a text
$\oplus$ Generally relevant but sometimes superficial comments that connect the quotation to a particular theme.
© Sentence-level errors exist but do not impede comprehension
D/F:
- An inadequate number of writers/texts covered
© Misquotations or superficially relevant quotations-a feeling of hurried choice
- Superficial comments that connect the quotation to a particular theme; or do so inaccurately; or few comments, if any.
$\oplus$ Several sentence-level errors


## |||||||||||||||||||||||||||||||||||||||||||||||||||||||||||||||||||||||||||||||||||||||||||||||||||||||||||||||||||||||||||||||||||||||

Note: In addition to giving you a ballpark grade above, I also may make a checkmark next to an item below that may be posing a problem in terms of standards for the CPB:
$\square$ Make Connections: when you approach one of our readings for quotations to reflect upon and question, look for passages/quotations that make you think of other works we have read. In your reflection and questions, strive to make connections between works.
$\square$ You need to select more quotations for each reading-shoot for more than one, at any rate.
$\square$ Try to expand your Reflection after a quotation; sometimes it seems thin or obvious.
$\square$ You need more questions that connect the quotations to the themes of our Unit. Try to end your CPB by posing questions that will really get conversation going-that tie the quotations to some ambiguity about self-discovery and identity.
$\square$ Use one page per writer/text-it makes it easier to follow. Give each CPB entry for each text a separate page.

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For your quotations, you need to include the page \#s in MLA form: "Etc etc etc etc etc" (21).At the top of each entry, clearly state the last name of the author, and under it, the title of the work you are quoting. Your formatting may also be tough to follow: use headings: "Quotations" "Reflection" "Questions" for each entry.

