

2202235 Reading and Analysis for the Studying of English Literature
Semester II, 2017
Thursday, February 1, 2018
Handout: Literary Explorations

1. Milton's Latin (and Greek) learning and that of his educated circle of readers makes for frequent etymological resonance in literary works where the writer makes use of a word's original meaning in the Latin or Greek roots as well as the contemporary English meaning. Go to a good reference with etymological information like the twenty-volume *Oxford English Dictionary (OED)*, Ayto's and Funk's *Word Origins*, or Hoad's *Concise Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology* and look up some of these words: consider, serve, poet, present, patience, prevent, state. Do you think the root meaning of the words is at play here? Explain using one or two examples of the cases you have looked up.

2. Names are sometimes part of a work's play with meanings. Look up Nathan, Linda, Bernard, Charles and other names you are curious about in Hanks and Hodges, *A Dictionary of First Names* or in another dictionary with etymological information. Make note of them and see if there is any significance in the meaning of the names that is relevant to the works we are reading.

3. Language changes over time and the sense of words in the seventeenth century may be different from what we know today. When Milton's Sonnet 19 speaker says "I fondly ask," describing his question "Doth God exact day-labour, light deny'd," the adverb *fondly* in our current understanding of "lovingly" does not seem to fit the tone or content of the line. What would be the meaning of *fond* that makes sense here? Look up at least three of these words in the *OED* which includes obsolete meanings by century in its definitions or in *NTC's Dictionary of Changes in Meaning* and decide if they mean something else to Milton and Shakespeare, and the readers of their time.
owe
meat
abandon
addict
broadcast
cute
fantastic
nice

promiscuous
punk
soft
chide
exact
talent
fond
state
mild
post
wait
awful
lord
girl
liberty
fast
explode

4. In Arthur Miller's *Death of Salesman*, written in the 1940s, characters speak in a colloquial oftentimes unfamiliar to us some seventy years later. What does Happy mean when he tells the girls "we're going to paint this town" (116)? Go to a good collection of slang like the *Chambers Slang Dictionary* or Eric Partridge's and Richard Spears's various dictionaries of slang and look up the expression "paint this town" and two more of the following: fresh, square, L seven, ankle-biter, boss, cop a breeze, Brody.

5. In a dictionary of theatrical terms, look up the word *pong* and *narrator*. How does the meaning of the latter differ from the sense for fiction?

6. In a dictionary that defines Latin or foreign phrases, find out what *carpe diem* means. Do you think Dylan Thomas was thinking of this phrase in the line "Wild men who caught and sang the sun in flight"?