

## ENGLISH 131: SOCIETY AND LITERATURE (ALG)

*"Things, Things, Things": Literary Consumerism in a Global Context from the Gilded Age to the Present*  
Spring 2015 | MWF 11:15-12:05 | Bartlett 119



Darren Waterston, "Filthy Lucre," 2014

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*"Always she had wanted, not money, but the things which money could give, leisure, attention, beautiful surroundings. Things. Things. Things" (67). – Nella Larsen, Quicksand*

### COURSE DESCRIPTION

This section of English 131 examines the relationship between society and literature, looking specifically at humans' relationships to material culture and global economic systems of power. Through readings of novels, short stories, essays, and films from the U.S., Europe, Africa, and Asia, we will address literature's capacity to endorse, naturalize, dramatize, critique, subvert, or reimagine our relationship to the material objects that occupy our world and to the transnational economic systems of power that shape societies. By placing literature from around the world in comparative perspective, we will ask questions such as: where do the things we own come from? What are the political implications of our relationship to material objects? What role do global configurations of power play in societies' access to goods, whether staples or luxury commodities? What function does literature serve in mediating our relationship to things? How do the stakes of consumerism and possession vary depending on the class, race, nationality, and gender of the consumer? How do practices of consumption shift during times of conflict? In our reading and writing assignments, we will study the ways writers explore societal issues including but not limited to: consumerism, capitalism, imperialism, colonialism, trade, globalization, commodities, gifts, debt, conspicuous consumption, aesthetic taste, collecting, hoarding, theft, cultural appropriation, assimilation, inheritance, fetishization, and desire. By the end of this course, you should be able to think more critically about the material objects in your own life, the objects authors represent in literature, the larger economic forces at work in societies, and the various ways that literature makes sense of our place in the material world.

### GENERAL EDUCATION COURSE OBJECTIVES

This course fulfills the General Education AL (literature) and G (global diversity) requirements. As a General Education course, our goal is to address fundamental questions, ideas, and methods of analysis in the humanities as they relate to literature and society in a global context. Specifically, we will use transnational flows of capital and

trade to connect the objects represented in literary texts to global economic and geopolitical contexts. By developing our critical thinking skills and textual analysis in writing assignments, group work, and class dialogue, we will come to a broader understanding of how social dynamics of economic power are reflected, reinforced, or contested in literature and film across national lines.

***The goals of the AL designation as they pertain to this course are:***

- To consider the role material objects play in identity formation across class, gender, racial, and national boundaries, and to examine how writers explore this role in fiction
- To situate literature in historical contexts to deepen understanding of writers’ relationships to societies
- To enhance awareness about how certain forms of writing and art construct or contest societal norms
- To sharpen the literary skills of close reading, argument, interpretation, comparison, and analysis
- To communicate effectively orally and in writing
- To connect literary texts to contemporary questions of globalization and consumerism

***The goals of the G designation as they pertain to this course are:***

- To produce awareness of our own understanding of the concept of "society" and think about how we can expand our apprehension of this concept through considerations of race, gender, ethnicity, social class, and nationality to be inclusive of diverse experiences
- To explore how global economic forces have shaped and are shaping ideas, practices, organizations, and the world, and to consider how writers have responded to these forces in literature
- To develop a more complex understanding of “society” and its various structures in a global context, and compare the ways that societies around the world have benefitted from or been oppressed by uneven global distribution of power and wealth
- To critically analyze one’s own relationship to material objects and consumer culture, and to place that relationship in comparative perspective to the cultural values of societies around the world
- To explore pluralistic perspectives about the material world and humans’ place in it

**REQUIRED TEXTS**

*Course texts are available at Amherst Books. Please purchase the editions listed below.*

Henry James, *The Spoils of Poynton* (1897) ISBN 978-0140432886

Nella Larsen, *Quicksand* (1928) ISBN 978-0813511702

Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o, *Weep Not, Child* (1964) ISBN 978-0143106692

Jhumpa Lahiri, *Interpreter of Maladies* (1999) ISBN 978-0395927205

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, *The Thing Around Your Neck* (2009) ISBN 978-0307455918

Anita Desai, *The Artist of Disappearance* (2011) ISBN 978-0547840123

**ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADES**

*Your final grade for the semester will be based on the following breakdown:*

<i>Assignment</i>	<i>Weight</i>	<i>Date due</i>
Essay one	20%	Friday, 2/27
Midterm close reading	20%	Wednesday, 3/25
Essay two	30%	Monday, 5/4
Moodle responses (averaged, 7 total)	15%	Tuesdays by 11pm
Participation	15%	Every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday

***Essays (50% total)***

You will write two essays—each 3-5 pages long—that present a coherent, unified argument about an assigned text. Essays should be double-spaced, typed in a legible, standard font (like Times New Roman or Calibri), and formatted following MLA style guidelines. I would prefer that you not consult outside sources, but if you do, please cite them accurately. Include page numbers in parentheses following quotations. The best essays will develop a specific focus to present a debatable, convincing argument; effectively incorporate ample textual evidence to support your argument; demonstrate incisive literary analysis of that textual evidence; employ logical organization on both

paragraph and sentence levels; and be carefully copyedited for clarity, grammar, punctuation, and spelling. These goals are most likely to be achieved if you allow yourself plenty of time to draft, respond to feedback from readers, and revise, so I will provide a suggested calendar to help you plan your process. I strongly encourage you to come to my scheduled office hours to discuss questions, brainstorm essay topics, and review drafts of your essays. All writers benefit from feedback and revision, and the students who tend to be most successful in my classes are the ones who meet with me early and often with drafts of their essays, who make serious efforts to revise their essays, and who challenge themselves to present complex ideas that are open to evolving throughout the course of drafting and revision. If you have a scheduling conflict with my office hours and would like to meet, please email me to arrange an appointment.

### ***Midterm Close Reading (20%)***

For your in-class midterm, you will receive 3-5 short passages from the assigned readings so far, and choose one to write about for the duration of the class. I expect you to connect the passage you select to the themes of the text as a whole, analyze the text in the context of our course's objectives, and practice the close reading skills that we will be honing throughout the semester. This in-class close reading may also help you generate ideas for more formal assignments, so you are welcome to expand upon and revise this writing assignment for your second essay.

### ***Moodle responses (15%)***

Every week you will be expected to post a short, informal response to the week's readings on Moodle by **11pm on Tuesdays**. You will not be asked to write a response on weeks you have a formal writing assignment due, and you can skip two responses, so you should have posted a total of **seven responses** by the end of the semester. These will be graded on a  $\sqrt{\phantom{x}}$ ,  $\sqrt{+}$ ,  $\sqrt{-}$  basis, and should be short, 1-paragraph responses to the assigned reading that demonstrate your thoughtful consideration of the text. They may ask questions about a reading, explore a specific passage in depth, or find connections between that week's reading and previous texts. These responses will provide material for our discussions and generate topics to consider for your formal essays.

### ***Participation (15%)***

Active, regular participation is a basic expectation of this course, and includes completing the assigned reading, (which will be about 30 pages per class period), bringing a copy of the reading with you to class, and contributing actively in class discussions. Learning to express yourself extemporaneously is an important skill in English classes (and in life!), so I encourage you to share your ideas freely, even if they are less developed than they might be if they were written. I also realize that personality types differ, so work in small groups will provide alternative opportunities to participate for those who are shy about talking to the class as a whole. In order to facilitate your active participation in the class, cell phones and other electronic devices need to be turned off or silenced (*not* on vibrate) and stowed before class begins.

## **CLASS POLICIES**

### ***Attendance***

Regular attendance is required. If you need to be absent for a required athletic event, field trip, military obligation, or court appearance; if there is a death or serious illness in your family; if you experience an accident or serious illness; if you are absent because of religious observance; or if there is some other legitimate extenuating circumstance preventing you from attending, you will most likely be excused from class. But note that, in such cases, you are responsible for prior notification and/or subsequent documentation and for making up all missed work. For the University's policies on absences, go to [www.umass.edu/registrar/students/policies-and-practices/class-absence-policy](http://www.umass.edu/registrar/students/policies-and-practices/class-absence-policy). For unexcused absences, in which you miss class for some ordinary reason—for instance, a cold or headache, a pressing deadline in another course, a missed flight or bus back to campus—you are allowed **three absences** without penalty; again, you are responsible for making up all work. If you miss more than that, your final grade may be lowered. Be aware that too many absences regardless of reason may make it impossible for you to meet course requirements.

### ***Plagiarism***

When using ideas, words, and short passages from other people's writing in your own writing, you are required to acknowledge the source. Failure to acknowledge the contribution of others is considered plagiarism, a serious

academic offense. All papers will be submitted to the electronic plagiarism detection service Turnitin.com. For the University's Academic Honesty Policy, see [www.umass.edu/dean\\_students/codeofconduct/acadhonesty/](http://www.umass.edu/dean_students/codeofconduct/acadhonesty/).

**Late Work**

Late assignments will be penalized 1/3 of a letter grade for each day late. You must contact me at least 48 hours before a deadline *with good reason* to receive an extension.

**RESOURCES**

**The Writing Center**

As a UMass Amherst student, you have access to free one-on-one writing support from our campus Writing Center, located in the Learning Commons of the W. E. B. Du Bois Library. Trained tutors work with writers in 45-minute sessions to brainstorm, structure a piece of writing, learn strategies for copyediting, and more. You can make an appointment online.

**Disabilities**

The University is committed to providing equal educational opportunity for all students. If you have a documented disability on file with Disability Services, you may be eligible for reasonable academic accommodations to help you succeed in this course. If you require extra time and/or a distraction-free setting for tests, it is especially important that you follow DS procedures and adhere to their deadlines for scheduling exams. For more information, please consult the Disability Services website at [www.umass.edu/disability/](http://www.umass.edu/disability/)

**CLASS SCHEDULE**

Readings and assignments are due on the date listed. Assigned page numbers for readings are included in parentheses. Readings available on Moodle are noted; all other readings come from the required texts.

	<p><b>Wednesday 1/21</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introductions</li> <li>• Go over syllabus</li> </ul>	<p><b>Friday 1/23</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Virginia Woolf, "Street Haunting" (Moodle)</li> <li>• Peter N. Miller, "How Objects Speak" (Moodle)</li> <li>• "Twenty Questions to Ask an Object" (Moodle)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Monday 1/26</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Henry James, <i>The Spoils of Poynton</i> chapters 1-5 (35-69)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Wednesday 1/28</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Henry James, <i>The Spoils of Poynton</i> ch. 6-8 (70-102)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Friday 1/30</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Henry James, <i>The Spoils of Poynton</i> ch. 9-12 (103-129)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Monday 2/2</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Henry James, <i>The Spoils of Poynton</i> ch. 13-15 (130-154)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Wednesday 2/4</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Henry James, <i>The Spoils of Poynton</i> ch. 16-18 (155-187)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Friday 2/6</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Henry James, <i>The Spoils of Poynton</i> ch. 19-22 (188-213)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Monday 2/9</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assign essay one</li> <li>• Start brainstorming topics and arguments</li> <li>• Nella Larsen, <i>Quicksand</i> ch. 1-4 (1-26)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Wednesday 2/11</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nella Larsen, <i>Quicksand</i> ch. 5-9 (27-52)</li> <li>• Finalize essay topic and start working towards an argument or claim</li> <li>• Start outlining and looking for quotes</li> <li>• Optional: meet in office hours to brainstorm ideas (especially if you're feeling stuck or confused)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Friday 2/13</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nella Larsen, <i>Quicksand</i> ch. 10-14 (53-80)</li> <li>• Preliminary thesis statement and outline with at least 3 quotes due</li> <li>• Begin drafting over the weekend</li> </ul>

<b>Tuesday 2/17</b> <b>(Monday is Presidents' Day)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Nella Larsen, <i>Quicksand</i> ch. 15-19 (81-108)</li> <li>Optional: bring a rough draft to office hours for feedback</li> </ul>	<b>Wednesday 2/18</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Nella Larsen, <i>Quicksand</i> ch. 20-25 (109-135)</li> <li>Completed body paragraph due</li> </ul>	<b>Friday 2/20</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Online peer response for first essay</li> </ul>
<b>Monday 2/23</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, <i>Weep Not, Child</i> ch. 1-2 (3-28)</li> <li>Revise based on peer response</li> <li>Optional: come to office hours to discuss revision strategies</li> </ul>	<b>Wednesday 2/25</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, <i>Weep Not, Child</i> ch. 3-6 (29-58)</li> <li>Copyedit essay</li> </ul>	<b>Friday 2/27</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>ESSAY ONE DUE</b></li> <li>Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, <i>Weep Not, Child</i> ch. 7-10 (59-92)</li> </ul>
<b>Monday 3/2</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, <i>Weep Not, Child</i> ch. 11-13 (93-118)</li> </ul>	<b>Wednesday 3/4</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, <i>Weep Not, Child</i> ch. 14-18 (119-147)</li> </ul>	<b>Friday 3/6</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, "Jumping Monkey Hill" from <i>The Thing Around Your Neck</i> (95-114)</li> </ul>
<b>Monday 3/9</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, "The Thing Around Your Neck" from <i>The Thing Around Your Neck</i> (115-127)</li> </ul>	<b>Wednesday 3/11</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, "A Private Experience" from <i>The Thing Around Your Neck</i> (43-56)</li> </ul>	<b>Friday 3/13</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, "Imitation" from <i>The Thing Around Your Neck</i> (22-42)</li> </ul>
<b>Monday 3/16</b> <b>SPRING BREAK</b>	<b>Wednesday 3/18</b> <b>SPRING BREAK</b>	<b>Friday 3/20</b> <b>SPRING BREAK</b>
<b>Monday 3/23</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Midterm review</li> </ul>	<b>Wednesday 3/25</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>MIDTERM CLOSE READING</b></li> </ul>	<b>Friday 3/27</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Watch <i>Persepolis</i> (Moodle)</li> </ul>
<b>Monday 3/30</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Discuss Marjane Satrapi, <i>Persepolis</i></li> </ul>	<b>Wednesday 4/1</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Anita Desai, "The Museum of Final Journeys" from <i>The Artist of Disappearance</i> (3-40)</li> </ul>	<b>Friday 4/3</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Anita Desai, "The Artist of Disappearance" from <i>The Artist of Disappearance</i> (95-125)</li> </ul>
<b>Monday 4/6</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Anita Desai, "The Artist of Disappearance" from <i>The Artist of Disappearance</i> (125-156)</li> </ul>	<b>Wednesday 4/8</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assign essay two</li> <li>Anita Desai, "Surface Textures" (Moodle)</li> </ul>	<b>Friday 4/10</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Jhumpa Lahiri, "This Blessed House" from <i>Interpreter of Maladies</i> (136-157)</li> <li>Start brainstorming essay topics and arguments</li> </ul>
<b>Monday 4/13</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Jhumpa Lahiri, "When Mr. Pirzada Came to Dine" from <i>Interpreter of Maladies</i> (23-42)</li> <li>Finalize essay topic and start working towards an argument</li> <li>Start outlining and looking for quotes</li> <li>Optional: meet in office hours to brainstorm ideas or to discuss your tentative topic/argument</li> </ul>	<b>Wednesday 4/15</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Jhumpa Lahiri, "A Real Durwan" from <i>Interpreter of Maladies</i> (70-82)</li> <li>Bring a quote from the text you're writing about to class (should be on the longer side; 150-200 words)</li> </ul>	<b>Friday 4/17</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Jhumpa Lahiri, "Mrs. Sen's" from <i>Interpreter of Maladies</i> (111-135)</li> <li>Bring a body paragraph to class, based on in-class drafting from Wednesday</li> <li>Over the weekend, work on drafting the rest of your essay</li> </ul>

<p><b>Monday 4/20</b> <b>NO CLASS: Patriots' Day</b></p>	<p><b>Wednesday 4/22</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jhumpa Lahiri, "A Temporary Matter" from <i>Interpreter of Maladies</i> (1-22)</li> <li>• Optional: bring a rough draft to office hours for feedback</li> </ul>	<p><b>Friday 4/24</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In class: listen to excerpt from <i>This American Life</i>, "The Invention of Money" (Moodle)</li> <li>• Be prepared to brainstorm conclusion ideas in class</li> <li>• Over the weekend, work on revising essay, especially paying attention to argument, textual evidence, analysis/close reading, and organization</li> </ul>
<p><b>Monday 4/27</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discuss Bong Joon-Ho, <i>Snowpiercer</i> (Moodle)</li> <li>• Optional: come to office hours with revised draft for additional feedback; go to Writing Center</li> </ul>	<p><b>Wednesday 4/29</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Final Reflection activities</li> <li>• Optional: come to office hours with revised draft for additional feedback; go to Writing Center</li> <li>• Copyedit essay</li> </ul>	<p><b>Monday 5/4</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>ESSAY TWO DUE ON MOODLE</b></li> </ul>

## ESSAY DESCRIPTIONS

### *Essay One*

Your first essay should present a coherent, unified argument about Henry James's *The Spoils of Poynton* and/or Nella Larsen's *Quicksand*, addressing some of the issues of class, taste, consumerism, and material culture that we've discussed. You should respond to one of the topics I have listed below, and present a close reading of one or both of these texts based on your own original interpretation.

1. Explore the ways that James and/or Larsen blur the distinction between people and things. How and why are material objects imbued with life in *The Spoils of Poynton* and/or *Quicksand*? How and why are people compared to things in these novels? How does each character's class, gender, or race affect their relationship with objects, or their own likeliness to be objectified? Using specific textual examples, discuss these authors' strategies for representing people and objects, and address the larger message they attempt to convey. What does this objectification of humans and humanization of objects tell us about the societies these authors were writing within? How is today's society similar to or different from the U.S. or U.K. of a hundred years ago, as depicted in these novels?
2. What attitudes about taste and class do we see in *The Spoils of Poynton* and/or *Quicksand*? What, for example, are we to make of the conflict between Mrs. Gereth's taste and Mona's taste, or between Helga's taste and the Naxos school's taste? How do aesthetic taste and social class align, reinforce one another, or come into conflict in these novels? In what ways are characters' standards of taste inflected or limited by their class, gender, or race? Are James and/or Larsen supporting, ironizing, mocking, or critiquing their characters' attitudes towards aesthetic taste? What messages do these texts convey about taste and class as social constructs?
3. Compare and contrast the characters of Fleda Vetch from *The Spoils of Poynton* and Helga Crane from *Quicksand*. Fleda and Helga are both depicted as outsiders—Fleda because of her class position, Helga because of her racial identity—both lack strong family support, both are subject to financially precarious situations, both are objectified as either decorative objects or prizes on the marriage market, and both participate in contemporary visual art—Fleda by training as an impressionist painter, Helga by posing for portraits. What can a comparison of these characters tell us about the nature of class, gender roles, race, marriage, financial instability, or artistic expression?
4. Although Henry James and Nella Larsen are both U.S. writers, their novels have many international connections. *The Spoils of Poynton* is set in England (likely because of James's longtime residency there), Mrs. Gereth's possessions have been collected from all over Europe, and Owen and Mona travel abroad, even thinking about spending the winter in India (208). In *Quicksand*, Helga Crane's travels to Copenhagen allow her to see herself in a new light, and she is also fascinated with objects imported from China, Japan, and other

places around the world (44). What purpose do these international allusions play in these novels? What does an international context illuminate about these authors' attitudes towards global systems of trade, transnational consumerism, and the relationship of the U.S. or U.K. to the rest of the world? How do James and/or Larsen use references to international travel and global commodity chains to comment on national aesthetic or economic values?

5. What kinds of narrative strategies do James and/or Larsen use to depict characters as sympathetic or unsympathetic? Which characters do they invite us to identify with, and why? How does each character's point of view shape our perception of other characters, of the novel as a whole, or of reality in general? What do these authors' narrative strategies tell us about human psychology, the nature of perception, and our understanding of reality? How do James and/or Larsen use narrative techniques to comment on social constructs such as gender, race, class, and taste?
6. Develop a focused, specific argument about *The Spoils of Poynton* and/or *Quicksand*, addressing any topic not listed here that interests you.

### **Essay Two**

Your second essay should present a coherent, unified argument about Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *Weep Not, Child*, or about any of the stories we read from Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *The Thing Around Your Neck*, Anita Desai's *The Artist of Disappearance*, or Jhumpa Lahiri's *Interpreter of Maladies*, or about the films *Persepolis* or *Snowpiercer*. You should respond to one of the topics I have listed below, and present a close reading of one or more of these texts based on your own original interpretation. You are encouraged to revise and elaborate on your midterm close reading, if you would like to expand upon what you wrote for that assignment.

1. Explore the ways that larger national or global systems of power (such as colonialism, imperialism, capitalism, trade, immigration, political oppression) affect the lives of individuals or groups in one of the texts we've read in the latter half of the semester. What kinds of relationships between wealth, class, power, race, and gender are played out in individuals' lives in these texts? How do historical conflicts or structural inequalities manifest themselves in individual characters' experiences? Why do authors choose to reimagine the repercussions of global systems of power through their characters' specific experiences? How can fiction depict historical events or structural inequalities in ways that non-fiction cannot? What narrative strategies do writers use to evoke emotional responses to these issues?
2. Track an object or series of objects in one of the texts we've read, using its literal and metaphorical associations to make a claim about the text. Consider how relationships between people, groups of people, or nations are formed and negotiated through objects, paying attention to the strategies authors use in describing and emphasizing certain objects. What can writers communicate through descriptions of material objects that they might not be able to express through other forms of description?
3. In Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's talk on "The Danger of a Single Story," she argues for the importance of hearing from a wide variety of voices in literature, to avoid simplistic or stereotyped perspectives. Following this logic, compare and contrast texts written by two authors, thinking about the ways that these authors offer different perspectives on a similar topic. By comparing these texts, what can we understand about the different cultural contexts these authors are writing from? What range of societal norms do they express, contest, construct, or assume? How can multiple views on an issue within these texts expand our perspective as readers?
4. Many of the texts we've read include ambiguous moments in which characters' actions or motivations could be interpreted a variety of ways. Explore one author's use of such ambiguities, addressing their narrative strategies for creating these moments of uncertainty, and their purpose in including such moments. How does the writer create this sense of uncertainty in the reader's mind? Why would they want to invoke such a feeling? How do these ambiguities contribute to the writer's overall purpose in the text?
5. In literature, scenes of writing, reading, learning, or creating art can often refer to both what is happening within the fictional plot of the text and to the author's own real-life process of creating their work. Examine some of these metafictional or self-referential moments in one or more texts. How and why does the author use depictions of the act of reading or writing to reflect on their own work? How can descriptions of visual art metaphorically represent the act of creating literary art? What attitudes about education are reflected in the text, and how do these attitudes invite the reader to think about the process of education that the text enacts?

6. Develop a focused, specific argument about Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *Weep Not, Child*, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *The Thing Around Your Neck*, Anita Desai's *The Artist of Disappearance*, Jhumpa Lahiri's *Interpreter of Maladies*, *Persepolis*, or *Snowpiercer*, addressing any topic not listed here that interests you.